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A Journal Kept During
The Siege of Fort William
Henry, August 1757.

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A JOURNAL KEPT DURING THE SIEGE OF FORT
WILLIAM HENRY, AUGUST, 1757.

BY I. MINIS HAYS, M. D.

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A JOURNAL KEPT DURING THE SIEGE OF FORT
WILLIAM HENRY, AUGUST, 1757.

BY L^{AMAR} MINIS HAYS, M. D.

(Read April 15, 1898.)

One hundred and fifty years ago the French claimed all of North America from the Atlantic coast range to the Rocky mountains and from Mexico and the Gulf to the northernmost limit, and they had planted flourishing colonies at the mouth of the St. Lawrence and of the Mississippi to control these great waterways, with their tributaries, to the North and West. These vast possessions, which they called New France, had a white population of about 80,000 souls.

The thirteen British colonies were scattered along the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Georgia, with a white population of about 1,160,000, who were continually extending further and further inland and encroaching upon the undefined area beyond the mountains claimed by both French and English. To maintain their territorial claims by force of arms, with the aid of their numerous Indian allies, and to keep in check the British colonists with their vastly larger population, and to drive back those who were already intruding into the broad valley of the Ohio, the French established a chain of forts and trading posts from Canada to Louisiana. They recognized that the fork of the Ohio and Niagara were the gateways to the great West and they therefore strongly entrenched themselves at these points. Lake Champlain and Lake George on the direct line between Montreal and New York, controlling the gateway to the Hudson, were also important strategic points for the mastery of which both French and English stubbornly contended. In September, 1755, Gen. Johnson defeated the French under Dieskau at the battle of Lake George, and in the following spring

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Montcalm was sent out to command the French forces and to retrieve their fortunes. Ticonderoga at the head of Lake Champlain was their most advanced post, while the British troops were entrenched at Fort William Henry at the head of Lake George.

Montcalm in planning his campaign for the summer of 1757 determined, with the aid of his Indian allies, to drive the English back from Lake George, perhaps to capture Fort Edward, fourteen miles to the south, and even to make a demonstration against Albany. In the latter part of July he concentrated his forces at Ticonderoga, and on the 1st of August, with about 7600 men, of whom more than 1600 were Indians, he started his expedition against Fort William Henry, which was commanded by Lieut.-Col. Monro, a brave Scotch veteran, and garrisoned by a force of little more than 2000 men. Gen. Webb was in command at Fort Edward with a force of about 1600 men, with half as many more distributed at Albany and the intervening forts. He promised his assistance, and Col. Monro had every reason to expect it, when Fort William Henry was attacked, but he failed at the last moment to give that support which it was his duty to have rendered. The rest of the sad story is told in the accompanying Journal which was recently found among the papers of Col. James Burd in the possession of this Society.

Col. James Burd was the third son of Edward Burd, a Scottish gentleman, who lived on his estate of Ormiston, near Edinburgh, by his wife, Jane Halliburton, a daughter of the Lord Provost of Edinburgh. He married Sarah Shippen, daughter of Edward Shippen, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He held a prominent position in the military forces of this colony, and at the time of the French attack on Fort William Henry he commanded Fort Augusta at the fork of the Susquehanna on the site of the present town of Sunbury, which was one of the long chain of forts that had recently been built by the Province of Pennsylvania to protect its territory in the war with the French and Indians.

Although the individual colonies maintained their independence they were forced to coöperate against the common foe, and the commanders of the frontier posts were kept advised of the movements of the enemy at all points along the line. The following interesting letter from Capt. Thomas Lloyd, also found among the Burd papers, conveyed to Col. Burd information in reference to the French attack on Fort William Henry:

TO MAJOR JAMES BURD, ESQUIRE.

PHILADELPHIA, August 9, 1757.

Sir :—We have just now recd. an Express from York informing that Governor De Lancy has marched with an Escort to be shortly follow'd by the whole Militia of that Government and a Demand made of a thousand from the Jerseys to the relief of Fort William Henry which is now invested by two thousand five Hundred french regulars four thousand five hundred Canadians and two thousand Indians with a Train of 36 Cannon and Five mortars against all which damn'd execrable Combination tis Impossible for that Fortress to hold out and the next news that arrives we expect will confirm their mastery of it. I need tell you no more than that I am Sir

Yours etc.

T. LLOYD.

Endorsed as "Rec'd 10th Sept. 1757."

It can be readily understood that this accompanying Journal of the capture of Fort William Henry and the subsequent massacre its garrison had a deep personal interest to Col. Burd, which suffices to account for its having been copied and sent to him. Fortunately he was a man of methodical habits and appears to have made a custom of filing and keeping all papers coming into his possession. Hence this copy has been preserved, while the original is unpublished and unknown, and has probably been lost or destroyed.

The French records give full data concerning the capture of Fort William Henry, but accounts written by observers on the English side are very few and, with the exception of Col. Frye's Journal,¹ most meagre. The accompanying Journal by an unknown writer who was evidently an officer within the fort has considerable historical value in not only confirming Col. Frye's account, but also in furnishing some additional details to complete the picture of the bravery of Col. Monro, of the incapacity of the British commander at Fort Edward, and of the treacherous apathy of the French in the face of the savage cruelties committed by their Indian allies on their capitulated foe.

¹ *The Port Folio*, May, 1819, p. 356.

COPY OF A JOURNAL KEPT DURING THE SIEGE OF FORT WILLIAM HENRY.

Tuesday
August 2^d 1757 }

In the Evening Col. Young of the 3^d Battalion of the Royal Americans and Col Fry of the N. England Forces came to the Camp at lake George with a reinforcement of 1100 men Regulars and Provincials making with what we had before upwards of 2400 men the whole under command of Col. Monro of the 35th Regiment.

Lieut. Forty of the 35th Reg^t and Cap^t of one of ye gallies detached 14 of his Sailors to reconitre the lake this Evening who returned about midnight and reported that they saw a large number of the Enemys Boats which gave them chace and had like to have been taken. During this night the Camp was frequently alarmed by the Enemys firing on our Centurys.

Wednesday 3^d Early this morning our Century discovered a large number of Boats on the lake close under a point of Land on the west shore distance about 5 miles upon which we fired our warning Guns (32 pounders) a Signal agreed on upon the approach of the Enemy. The French fired at the fort from their Boats lying at the point but their Shot did not reach half way: At this point the Enemy landed their forces and Artillery. This morning we brought in our live Stock put them into the Picquet Store yard but being neglected afterwards strayed and fell into the Enemy's Hands.

Cap^t W^m Arbuthnot was ordered out with a Party of his N. England Forces to burn and destroy some Huts and Hedges on the west of the Fort, which he did with difficulty. Nine o'Clock discovered a number of French Regulars marching S. W. near the foot of a Hill distant about 1000 yds which we apprehended were intended to cut off our Communication with Fort Edward. Lieu^t Collins of the Royal Regiment of Artillery gave orders to cannonade them as they marched which was done. Our rangers and a party of Provincials were Smartly engaged with enemy S. W. of the Camp on the Ground w[h]ere S^{ir} W^m Johnson engaged and beat the Enemy in the year 1755 and beat them off several times.

Twelve o'Clock we could plainly see from the Fort that the Enemy were throwing up an entrenchment and erecting a Battery at the distance of about 7 or 800 yards on a Clear Ground bearing

N, B, W, Saw several large Boats coming to the Point w[h]ere the Enemy landed.

Two o'Clock Mons^r Mont Calmn sent an officer with a Flag to demand the Fort but the brave Col^o Monro rejected the Summons with Scorn. The Remainder of this day was spent in Bombarding the Enemys works, Capt. McCloud commanding and cannonading. The Artillery fired Several Shot from the Camp which did great Service in beating back the Indians. One of our Balls fell on an Indian Hutt and killed many.

Tuesday [*sic*] 4th Early this morning the Enemy's works were in great forwardness with a ten Gun Battery almost finished. Their Entrenchment approached towards the Fort thus ~~~~~ Saw several large Boats coming to the Point w[h]ere the Enemy landed from Ticonderoga : this day we had several Skirmishes from all quarters in which our people behaved with great Bravery, a mortar being pointed towards another Indian Hutt fell on it and killed Several. During this day we cannonaded the French Battery and threw a large number of Shells into their Entrenchm^{ts}. The Artillery at the Camp kept a Constant fire on the Enemy as they came to Attack our out Guards and Rangers who drove them off into the woods. The Rangers brought in an Enemy wounded Indian but he soon died.

Friday 5th This morning the Enemy began to cannonade our Forts with nine pieces of Cannon 18 & 12 pounders. It was some Time before they could find their mark. At Eleven they tried their Shells, mostly 13 Inches diameter, which fell short but towards the afternoon they got their distance very well, several of their Small Shells falling into the Parade. One of their Shott carried away the Pully of our Flag Staff and the falling of our flag Much rejoiced the Enemy ; but it was soon hoisted tho' one of the men that was doing this had his head Shot off with a Ball, and another wounded. A part of the Enemy and their Indian [allies] advanced near our Camp on which the brave Cap^t Waldo of the N. England forces went out to take Possession of a piece of rising Ground near the wood on which a brisk fire unsued on both sides. Col. Monro sent out a second party to Surround the Enemy, but they were forced back and the Enemy advanced up to our quarter Guard. Capt. M. Cloud brought his Cannon to bear upon them soon dispersed them. Here an unlucky accident happened, as some of our men were returning to Camp were taken for the enemy and fired upon by

which Several were killed & wounded. During this Attack poor Cap^t Waldo was Shot and Soon Expired. Cap^t Cunningham of the 35th Reg^t was wounded in the right arm.

Saturday [6th] Last night the enemy carried on their Entrenchment^s and Erected a Battery of 10 Guns mostly 18 Pounders about 6 or 700 yards from us bearing N. W. both of Cannon & Mortars. This was the hottest days action from all quarters; tho' as yet our Garrison remained in high spirits expecting Sir W. Johnson with the Militia and Gen. Liman with the N. England Forces to the number of 3 or 4000 men which we heard were on their march with some more Cannon. Would to God they were permitted to come as their Good will was not wanting. A party of Indians were seen advancing with great Speed towards the road that leads to fort Edward which Confirmed us in our Belief of a Relief.

About 11 o'Clock Mons^r Montcalm sent an officer with a Flag, with a letter that was intercepted by the above mentioned Indians from Gen^l Webb wrote by his Aid-de-Camp M^r Bartman to Col: Monro acquainting him that his Excellency could not give him his assistance as the Militia had not yet come up to Fort Edward, &c. The French officer delivered an other letter from Montcalm acquainting Col: Monro that he came from Europe and Should Carry on the war as a Gentleman and not as the Savages do "but like a true Frenchman, both broke his word and Articles of Capitulation as will appear in the Sequel of this relation. During this interval the Enemy made a Shew of all their Indians, about 1200, on a rising Ground about 250 yards distance bearing S: W: which [while] their Engineers reconitred our old Camp Ground which was afterwards a great Advantage to them. As soon as their Officer returned they began their fire in good Earnest which we returned with the utmost bravery. This day we Split two of our heaviest Pieces of Cannon (viz: 32 pounders) and our largest Mortar was rendered useless which was very unlucky for us as we could not be Supplied with others in their place. This day Col^o Monro published his orders to all in the Fort that if any person proved cowardly or offered to advise giving up the Fort that he should be immediately hanged over the walls of the Fort and he did not doubt but the officers in the Garrison would stand by him to the last and that he was determined to stand it out to the last or as long as two Legs were together.

Sunday 7th The Enemy continued plying us very hard with their

Cannon and Bombs while the Compliment was returned by us with all our Artillery, still hoping for a Reinforcement from Fort Edward. A Shell fell into the South Bastion broke one man's Leg and wounded another; Split one of our 18 Pounders and burst a Mortar. Several of the Enemys Shells fell near the Camp S. SE of our Fort about 400 yards distance and on a line with the fort from the Enemys two Batteries, so that their Shot missing the Fort could Strike the Camp. It appeared that the Enemy could throw their Shells 1300 yards. A Shell fell amongst the officers whilst at dinner, but did no other mischief than Spoil their dinner by the dirt it tore up. Another Shell fell into the east or flag Bastion and wounded two or three men.

Monday 8th We now began to believe we were much slighted, having received no reinforcement from Fort Edward as was long expected. The Enemy were continuing their Approaches with their Entrenchments from the 2^d Battery towards the Hill on our old Camp Ground, where they were erecting a third Battery, which would have greatly distressed us: There were frequently during these last 2 or 3 days smart skirmishes near our Camp, but we beat them off the Ground. This night we could hear the Enemy at Work in our Garden, on which some Grape Shott was sent in amongst them, which had good Effect as it drove them off, however they had got their 3^d Battery almost finished by Day Light.

Tuesday 9th This Day the Enemies Lines were finished, parallel to our West Curtain in the Garden, Distance about 150 Yards. Col^l Munro, after a Council of War had been convened, wherein the Officers were of Opinion, that the Loss of our heavy Cannon viz: 2, 32 pounders, 1, 24 pounders, two 18 pounders, one 9 pounder & 3 Mortars bursting would render it impossible to defend the Fort much longer, as the Enemies Batteries had increased and our Metal failing us, & no help coming, wherefore it was thought advisable that a white Flag should be hung out in order to capitulate; which was done accordingly, and the firing ceased: The Enemy very readily granted the Capitulation: had Monsieur Montcalm been a Man of Honor, he would have performed his part; but instead of that such a Scene of Barbarity ensued as is scarce to be credited: After the Articles were agreed on & signed, the Officers left the Fort to a Regiment of the French Regulars who were ready at the Gate, thro' which we marched with most of our valuable Effects & Arms to the Camp and in the Evening three Companies of the

35th Regim^t had marched out & the other three Companies were on their march out of the Breastwork, when we received Orders to return to our Posts again where we remained till next morning.

Wednesday 10th This morning the Marquis MontCalm being desirous of our being eye witnesses of how well he was able to perform his part of the Capitulation (see the 7th Article), the Indian Doctors began with their Tomhawks to cure the sick and wounded. They began to seize on all the negroes and Indians whom they unmercifully draged over the breast work and scalped. Then began to plunder Col^o Youngs and some other officers Baggage on which Col^o Monro applied to Montcalm to put a Stop to these inhuman Cruelties but to no purpose, for they proceeded with out interruption in taking the Officers Swords Hats Watches Fuzees Cloaths and Shirts leaving quite naked and this they did to every one they could lay hands on. By this time the 35th Reg^t had almost formed their line of March and the Provincials coming out of the breast work the French officers did all they could to throw them into Confusion alledging as soon as the Indians had done stripping them they would fall on and scalp them which thru [*sic*] them in a panick that rushed on the front and forced them into Confusion, the Indians pursued tearing the Children from their Mothers Bosoms and their mothers from their Husbands, then Singling out the men and Carrying them in the woods and killing a great many whom we saw lying on the road side. The greates[t] part and best of the plunder was brought to the french General. Our officers did all in their power to quiet our Soldiers advising them not to take notice but suffer themselves to be stript without Resistance lest it should be Construed as a Breach of our part of the Capitulation and those that were in the rear Should fall a Sacrifice to their unbounded fury. Those therefore that had been able to perserve their arms carried them clubed. The French it is true had a detachm^t of their men drawn up as is mentioned in the 1st & 6th Article of Capitulation but their only business was to receive the plunder by the Savages.

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